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THE UNIVERSITY

# "Feeling Is Tense"



1937

Lynchings . . . . . 8

Prevented Lynchings . . 56

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## ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN WOMEN FOR THE PREVENTION OF LYNCHING

MRS. ATTWOOD MARTIN      MRS. W. A. NEWELL  
*Chairman*                    *Secretary*  
Louisville, Ky.                Morganton, N. C.

JESSIE DANIEL AMES  
*Director*

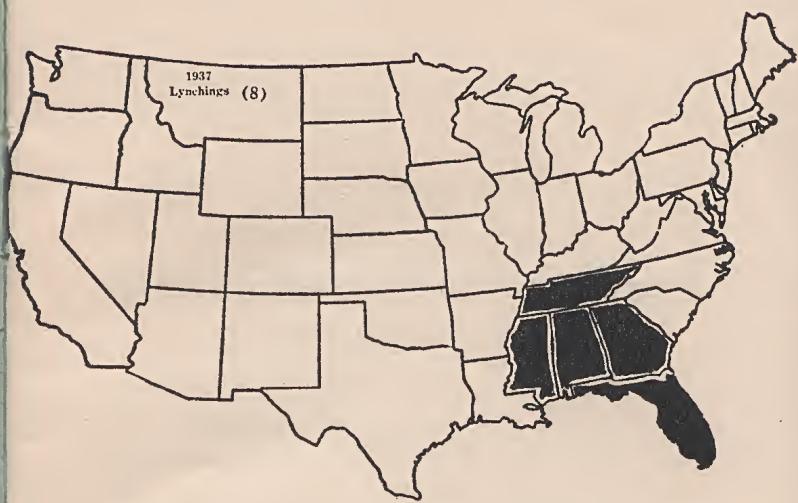
710 Standard Building  
Atlanta, Georgia

Bulletin No. 8      February, 1938

Reprint March, 1938

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## **"Feeling Is Tense"**

The sheriff of a county reflects the state of mind of his constituents more truly than does any other official elected by popular vote. He knows what is expected of him and, as a rule, he meets these expectations even if he is cast in the role of a craven.

He is the barometer of public opinion on law observance and, as a barometer indicates the weather, the sheriff indicates the mind of his people in respect to law.

If there is intent to lynch a prisoner, the sheriff knows it and responds to the emotional demands of his supporters. He knows when "feeling is tense" and judges accurately the number of votes involved. He acts in line with his judgment.

He may quietly remove his prisoner.

He may increase his force to stand off the mob.

He may allow himself to be "taken by surprise and overpowered."

Whichever one of these courses he adopts he is following the wishes of the majority of his political supporters as nearly as he can determine them.

And a sheriff rarely guesses wrong.

The sheriff is the "front" for his county and the agent of his people. It is easy to pillory an individual whose identity is known. So it is that a sheriff who permits his constituents to mete out extra-legal justice by means of a rope or a blow-torch receives the contempt and ridicule of "outsiders" with closed-mouth grimness, knowing that this is the price he pays for his office of trust which to him may be nothing more than a job.

Nothing indicates the change in public opinion in Southern counties so greatly as the increasing number of sheriffs who, sensing that "feeling is tense," move to protect their counties against the charge of lawlessness and their constituents against the crime of murder. A sheriff who prevents a lynching acts in accordance with the desires of the majority of his supporters just as surely as does the sheriff who permits a lynching.

Fortunate is the sheriff whose constituents look upon him as the upholder of law and the protector of their reputation as law-abiding citizens, who support him in the performance of his sworn duty and expect him to act courageously in preserving the dignity of the county when "feeling is tense."

Central Council  
of the  
Association of Southern Women for  
the Prevention of Lynching

Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames, Director  
Atlanta, Ga.

Mrs. Attwood Martin, Chairman  
Louisville, Ky. Mrs. W. A. Newell,  
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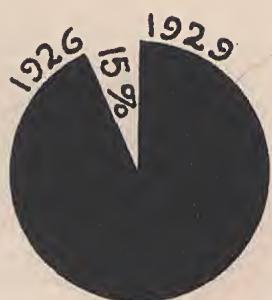
CHAIRMEN OF STATE COUNCILS

<i>Alabama</i> Mrs. J. Brevard Jones Montgomery	<i>Mississippi</i> Mrs. L. W. Alford McComb
<i>Arkansas</i> Mrs. B. J. Reaves Little Rock	<i>North Carolina</i> Miss Clara I. Cox High Point
<i>Florida</i> Mrs. W. P. Cornell Jacksonville	<i>Oklahoma</i> Mrs. J. D. Lawhorn Hugo
<i>Georgia</i> Mrs. W. A. Turner Newnan	<i>South Carolina</i> Mrs. George E. Davis Orangeburg
<i>Kentucky</i> Mrs. G. W. Hummel Bowling Green	<i>Tennessee</i> Mrs. G. G. McClure Clarksville
<i>Louisiana</i> Mrs. R. H. Agate Lafayette	<i>Texas</i> Mrs. Alex W. Spence Dallas
<i>Virginia</i> Mrs. James A. Richardson Richmond	

\*LYNCHINGS  
For Alleged Rape and For All  
Other Causes



123—Total number persons lynched, 1922-1925.  
29—Of the victims were accused of rape, or 23.6%.



67—Total number persons lynched, 1926-1929.  
10—Of the victims were accused of rape, or 15%.



70—Total number persons lynched, 1930-1933.  
12—Of the victims were accused of rape, or 17%.



50—Total number persons lynched, 1934-1937.  
10—Of the victims were accused of rape, or 20%.

“... Though lynchings are not confined to any one section of the United States, we are aroused by the record which discloses *our heavy responsibility* for the presence of this crime in our country. We believe that this record has been achieved because public opinion has accepted too easily the claim of lynchers and mobsters that they were acting *solely in the defense of womanhood*. In the light of facts, this claim can no longer be used as a protection to those who lynch. We pledge ourselves to create a new public opinion in the South which will not condone for any reason whatever acts of mobs or lynchers.”

—SIGNED BY SOUTHERN WHITE WOMEN.

\*Figures taken from Negro Year Book, 1937, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama.

## LYNCHINGS 1937

1—Alabama	2—Mississippi
3—Florida	1—Georgia
1—Tennessee	

### Two Lynched, Suspected of Criminal Assault

In the Alabama lynching Governor Graves used his entire power to impeach the sheriff of Henry County for malfeasance in office. The case was tried before the Supreme Court of Alabama, and though the sheriff was exonerated, the testimony disclosed that the sheriff waited about four hours before he began to search for the mob; that he, with his deputy, drove about forty miles in the next four hours, covering every road from the county seat except the one leading to the scene of the alleged assault. The sheriff and his deputy never overtook the mob.

The lynching in Decatur County, Georgia, was peculiar, not because of the casual and unconvincing identification, nor because the victim was shot while "attempting to escape" from two officers and a former employer, but because the mob, snatching the body from the parlors of an undertaker to which the officers brought it, performed orgiastic rites of savages.

### Three Lynched, Suspected of Murder

The double lynching in Montgomery County, Mississippi, internationally known as the Duck Hill torch lynchings, is too well known to justify further details. One victim had pleaded guilty of murder and his trial was set within the next twenty-four hours. One maintained his innocence.

The lynching in Tipton County, Tennessee, was committed by a mob who seized their victim from officers who were returning the prisoner to the county from which he had been removed in July for safe-keeping.

### Two Lynched, Accused of Assault to Kill

In Leon County, Florida, a double lynching of two boys for alleged assault upon an officer is generally attributed to the rage of citizens aroused by a prevented lynching in a nearby county.

### One Lynched, Suspected of Robbery and an Unnatural Crime

In Santa Rosa County, Florida, again on the West Coast, a boy was lynched. As in the Leon County lynching there were only four in the mob.

## LYNCHINGS BY STATES

### Alabama

#### *Abbeville, Henry County*

February 2—Negro accused of criminal assault on a white woman; taken from custody of Sheriff J. L. Corbitt. Attorney General of Alabama declared that he could prove "the wrong Negro was lynched." Impeachment proceedings brought against Sheriff, who was exonerated by a 4 to 2 vote.

### Florida

#### *Tallahassee, Leon County*

July 20—Two Negroes, charged with stabbing an officer, were taken from the jail and shot to death. Governor Cone said, "This is a murder, not a lynching," and declared that those guilty must be brought to justice. Sheriff Frank Stoutsire, upon receipt of report from FBI office in Washington that bullets taken from Negroes' bodies did not come from guns belonging to any of Tallahassee's policemen, said: "In my opinion there isn't much more we can do." (News clipping, Aug. 3.)

#### *Milton, Santa Rosa County*

October 3—Negro accused of "unnatural crime" against a white boy and robbery of a filling station was taken from Sheriff Joe Allen on highway and shot. As in the Tallahassee lynching, the mob consisted of only four men, none of whom the Sheriff recognized. Prisoner had been held at Panama City for safekeeping until time for his trial; he was being brought back to Milton for trial when the mob got him.

### Georgia

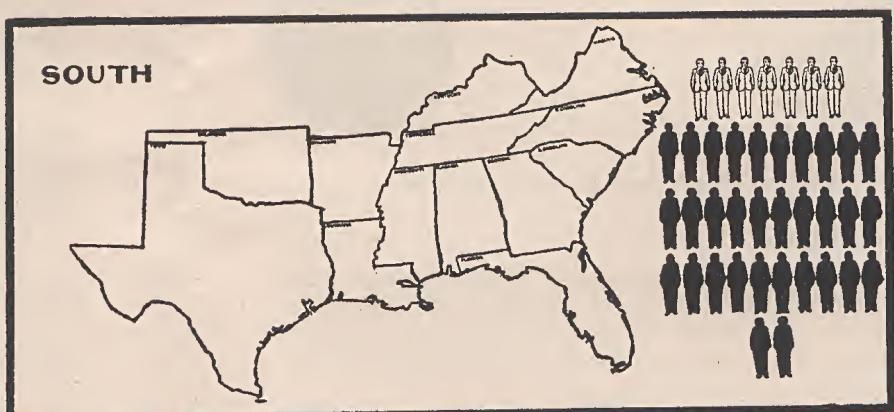
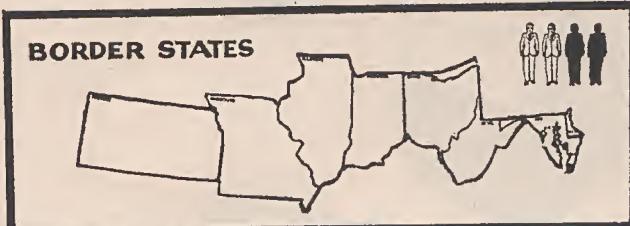
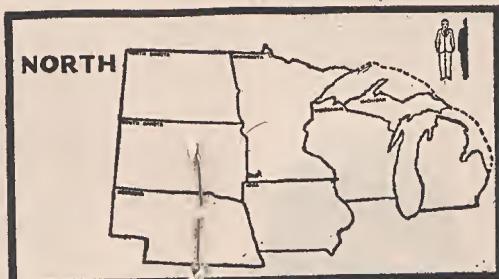
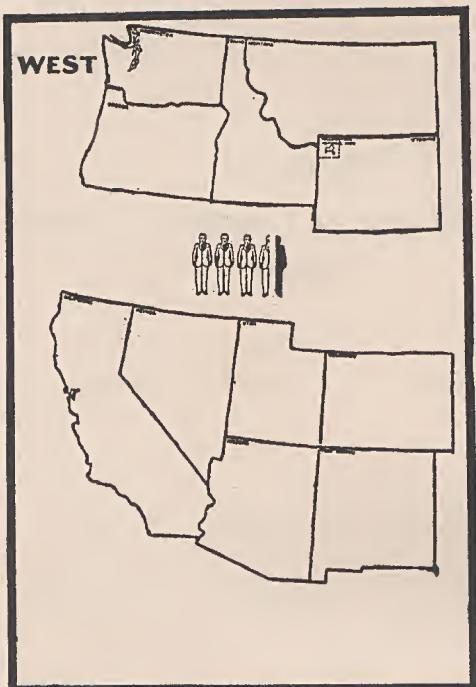
#### *Bainbridge, Decatur County*

May 25—Negro, accused of murdering two white women and assaulting one of them, was killed by local officers, H. G. Pollock and R. A. Stephens, who were returning him to Bainbridge from Dothan, Alabama. His dead body was seized from a Negro undertaking establishment and burned, after being dragged through the town behind an automobile.

## LYNCHINGS 1882-1936

### Geographical and Racial Distribution

Each Figure—100 Lynchings



#### The Lynching Map of the United States 1882-1936

#### Racial and Geographical Distribution of Lynchings

All the States of the Union have had lynchings except

Connecticut	New Hampshire
Maine	Rhode Island
Massachusetts	Vermont

New York has had two lynchings, one white and one Negro; Pennsylvania six lynchings, one white and five Negroes; and New Jersey one lynching, a Negro.

#### The North (7 States)

has had 152 lynchings, of which 137 were white persons and 15 were Negroes. Nebraska lynched the largest number in this section.

#### The West (10 States)

has had 397 lynchings, of which 365 were white and 32 Negroes. Montana leads this section in the number of lynchings.

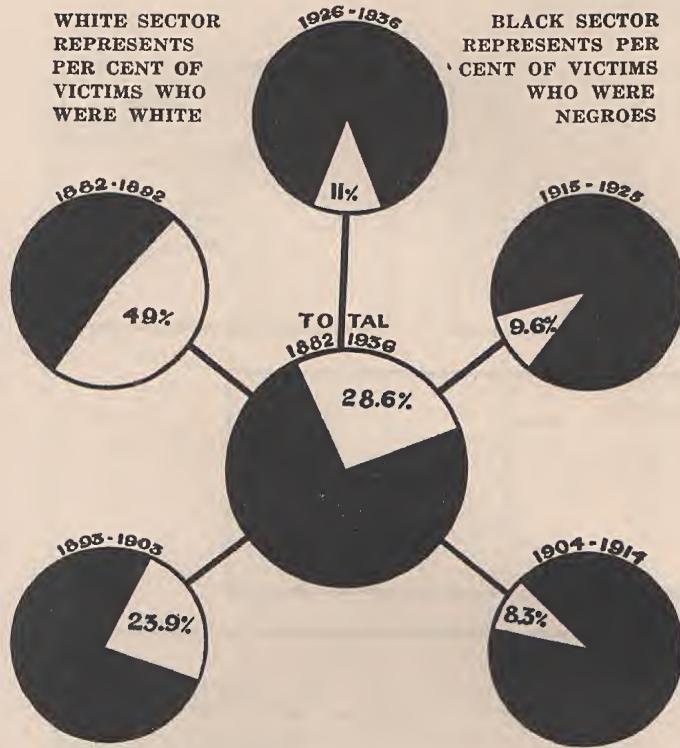
#### The Border States (9 in Number)

so designated because they all adjoin one or more of the Southern states and have felt the influence of racial and sectional strife, have had 403 lynchings. Missouri leads this section in the number of lynchings.

#### The South (13 States)

has had 3,891 lynchings (80.2% of all lynchings), of which 678 have been white persons and 3,213 have been Negroes. Mississippi leads the Southern states and the entire country in the number of lynchings.

## LYNCHINGS 1882-1936



### Racial Distribution of Lynchings

#### 1882-1892

During the first eleven years—1882-1892—in which lynching statistics were recorded, 49% of all persons lynched were white. This was due in part to the opening of the West to settlers who established authority by extra-legal processes.

Ways of evading the War Amendments to the Constitution which would stand up before the Supreme Court were successfully worked out and became operative during this period.

In 1892 the greatest number of lynchings were recorded in all time—255.

#### 1893-1903

The West became fairly law-abiding; lynchings moved South. During this period, men with undoubted oratorical gifts and with questionable political ideals sprang into public favor. Negroes were finally completely disfranchised. The proportion of Negroes lynched to white persons rose 25.1%.

#### 1904-1914

After the Negro was disfranchised, other issues arose. The South—and the rest of the country—were fairly on the road to recovery from the political and economic chaos following the War and Reconstruction. Educational opportunities increased; the aftermath of the Spanish-American War diverted the emotional energies of the nation and offered new political outlets. Lynchings dropped off 50%, but the proportion of Negroes to white persons took another jump by 15.6%.

#### 1915-1925

This period covers the World War, the migration of the Negro to the North, the organization of bootleggers under prohibition, and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. The K. K. K., following the close of the War, offered for lawless acts human targets other than Negroes. This may explain the small decrease in the proportion of Negroes lynched.

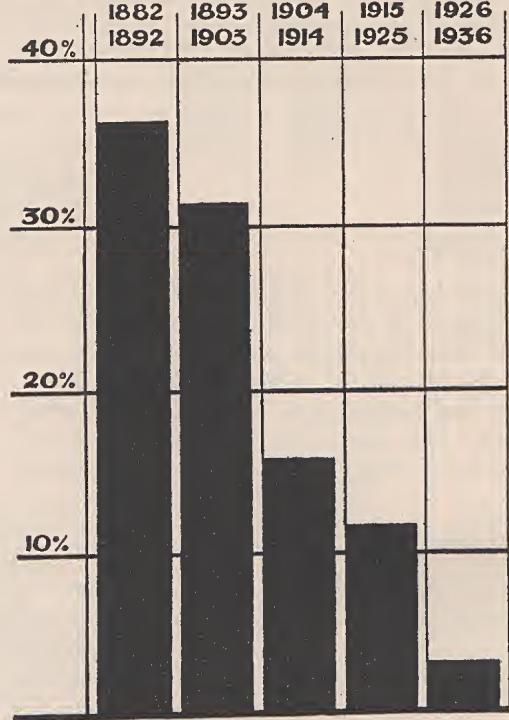
#### 1926-1936

Though the Ku Klux Klan passed out as a political and social weapon, bootleggers and kidnappers were beginning to wield a powerful influence. During these years extra-legal punishment had been visited upon these enemies by outraged citizens and thus the proportion of Negroes to white persons lynched again dropped. Public opinion against lynching in the South had been growing stronger and more articulate. In 1932 the status of the Democratic Party changed from a sectional minority to a national majority party, which change has contributed to the determination of Southern citizens to adjust racial difficulties without resort to lynching.

## LYNCHINGS

1882-1936

### PERCENTAGE BY 11 YEAR PERIODS



#### Distribution of Lynchings by Eleven-Year Periods

##### From 1882 to 1903,

inclusive, 68.6% of all lynchings were committed. These twenty years completed the economic fight to settle the West and the political fight to disfranchise Negroes.

##### From 1904 to 1914,

following the political and economic upheavals of the preceding periods, the percentage of lynchings to the whole number dropped sharply to 16.3%.

##### The next eleven years, 1915-1925,

covers the period of the World War, excess patriotism, and the migration of the Negro out of the South. The greatest drop in the number has occurred in the last eleven years—3.7% of the total number, during which an intensive program of education on causes has been carried on by Southern women.

LYNCHINGS (1922-1936)	4 Yrs. Ku Klux Klan			4 Yrs. Prosperity			4 Yrs. Depression			16 Years Recovery			16 Years State Total		
	1922-1925	1926-1929	1930-1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Alabama	4	0	5	1	0	0	1	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Arkansas	8	5	1	0	0	1	0	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Florida	21	13	4	2	2	1	3	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46
Georgia	19	1	10	0	2	6	3	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39
Kentucky	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Louisiana	6	3	6	2	4	0	0	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Mississippi	25	17	10	6	7	0	2	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
Missouri	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Oklahoma	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
North Carolina	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
South Carolina	2	3	6	0	0	0	0	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Tennessee	3	4	4	1	1	1	1	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Texas	24	13	6	1	1	2	0	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46
Virginia	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
West Virginia	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>TOTAL—SOUTH</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>295</b>
California	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Illinois	1	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Indiana	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Kansas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maryland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
New Mexico	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
North Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ohio	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Utah	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL—UNITED STATES</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>

## PREVENTED LYNCHINGS—1937

Eighty persons were threatened with death by mobs in 1937.

Quick action by officers of the law and level headed citizens prevented these possible lynchings. A partial list of officers who deserve special mention is given herewith.

	<i>Intended Victim</i>	<i>County</i>		
<i>Alabama</i>				
E. E. Evans, Deputy	1 Negro	Macon	J. I. Lowry, Sheriff	1 Negro
C. H. Fore, Sheriff	5 Negroes	Shelby	Emmett Quinn, Deputy	1 Negro
R. L. Holcomb, Sheriff	1 Negro	Mobile	R. W. Moore, Chief of Police	Fulton
W. E. Holt, Sheriff	1 Negro	Lee	T. G. Peterson, Sheriff	11 Negroes
A. B. Lightner, Sheriff	1 Negro	Coffee	Henry J. Sweat, Sheriff	Ware
W. B. Paul, Sheriff	5 Negroes	Coffee	<i>Louisiana</i>	
Haygood Peterson, Sheriff	1 Negro	Montgomery	T. E. Robinson, Deputy	1 Negro
J. T. Sanders, Deputy	1 White	Butler	<i>Mississippi</i>	
<i>Arkansas</i>			J. E. Carr, Chief of Police	Lee
A. W. Ellis, Sheriff	1 Negro	Ouachita	A. B. Conner, Sheriff	Adams
Will Greer, Deputy	2 Negroes	Miller	W. H. Hinson, Constable	Yazoo
T. C. Sewell, Sheriff			<i>North Carolina</i>	
<i>Florida</i>			H. M. Clark, Sheriff	Bladen
Fred Clark, Sheriff	1 Negro	Jackson	Todd, Deputy Sheriff	
L. L. Fabisinski, Judge	1 Negro	Franklin	Dunlap, Policeman	1 Negro
Ira Hutchinson, Judge			Gibson, Policeman	
C. L. Robbins, Sheriff			Corporal L. S. Allen, Highway Patrol	Scotland
John Scott, Sheriff			John W. Moore, Sheriff	1 Negro
Rex Sweat, Sheriff	1 Negro	Duval	D. S. Williamson, Sheriff	Iredell
<i>Georgia</i>			<i>South Carolina</i>	
J. I. Harrington, Sheriff	1 Negro	Burke	W. R. Hall, Sheriff	3 Negroes
			<i>Tennessee</i>	
			J. A. Barton, Sheriff	Florence
			<i>Texas</i>	
			Sweeten Jess, Sheriff	Coffee
			Wilson, Sheriff	Henderson
				Harrison

In twenty-seven of these thirty cases in which peace officers acted to preserve law and order, the offenses with which the intended victims were charged were capital crimes involving murder, criminal assault, and attempted criminal assault.

### Prevented Lynchings

1922-1925



284

### Lynchings

123

1926-1929



182

67

1930-1933



242

70

1934-1937



357

50

*Each figure represents 25 persons or major fraction of 25.*

A Sheriff in Mississippi "takes just pride in the fact that, though he has had several threatened lynchings during his term of office, so far in every case, as he puts it, he has 'outwitted the mob.' This sheriff holds that 'it is practically impossible to defy a mob but it is not particularly difficult to out-think a mob'."—Quoted from *Death By Parties Unknown*.